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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Harbor Comments
805 S.W. Broadway, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97205

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RE: Comments on EPA Proposed Plan for Portland Harbor Superfund Site cleanup

On behalf of the affiliated unions of the Oregon AFL-CIO, we recognize the Proposed Plan marks a significant milestone in a very long process for the Portland Harbor Superfund site. We support a river cleanup that protects the health of Portlanders and the environment and is done cost-effectively.

The Willamette River is many things to Portlanders -- a place for recreation, a home for wildlife and also an industrial harbor, Oregon's largest seaport. Portland's working harbor is important to us. Nearly 30,000 people are employed in Portland's working harbor, jobs that must be preserved during the cleanup.

We are concerned about the ultimate cost of cleanup and ensuring that the true costs and benefits are transparent to Portlanders. We believe some of EPA's cost assumptions are overly-optimistic and resulted in a final price tag that is not accurate. We urge EPA to get their numbers right so Portlanders are educated about the costs of cleanup. The cleanup of the Portland Harbor arrives at a time that our city is growing and we face many critical affordability issues. We believe the final decision needs to provide certainty of cost for Portland residents who will ultimately be paying some of these cleanup costs.

We believe the cleanup of the Willamette River offers opportunities for the future of our region. We are hopeful that the final cleanup decision provides certainty for future investments in Portland Harbor. We believe the cleanup can also benefit workers by providing local jobs.

The Portland Harbor Superfund site is very large and we understand that the risks are not the same across the site. We encourage EPA to prioritize cleaning up the most contaminated locations first and giving parties' flexibility to move forward quickly. The opportunities presented by cleanup are only realized if this moves forward soon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Tom Chamberlain
President, Oregon AFL-CIO